

Fellow Villagers,

At our most recent Trustee meeting, members of our volunteer fire department expressed their frustration with me for asking that a non-authorized flag be removed from one of our fire trucks. I am very pleased that they attended the meeting to make their concerns known. It's exactly why we hold two public comment sessions at each Board meeting.

Last year, after a disturbing incident involving a racially charged symbol displayed on the inside of a Village DPW truck, our labor attorney advised that the Board adopt a policy explicitly stating that Village property, including vehicles and uniforms, could not be a platform to display imagery not specifically related to Village government. We did carve out an exception that at the discretion of the Board, this policy could be waived. While the fire department has asked for an exception, the board has not granted it.

Let me be clear: I have no objection to finding a symbol that honors first responders who lose their life in carrying out their heavy responsibilities to keep us all safe.

The flag that the fire department wishes us to consider is troubling for me. It is a variant of the flag flown by the Blue Lives Matter movement. Here is some of the language that Blue Lives Matter uses to define themselves:

"Dedicated to the warriors who stand on this line, to those who wage war in the streets, to those we have lost and will lose, to our brothers and sisters."

"...this site is for American's who support Law Enforcement against the insanity they are currently facing from BLM, Antifa and the liberal politicians who are threatening their jobs and putting them at great risk by not allowing them to do their jobs and showing support for the criminals who are murdering more officers every day!"

My personal belief is that the American Flag should not be altered at all, and especially not to suit one's political agenda. Honor and respect the flag. Fly it properly. Don't replace the stars with a symbol. Don't add anything to the stripes. And don't change the colors.

I have worked very hard to keep national politics and the culture wars out of Village government. It's why Unite Sleepy Hollow was established as a committee — to elect the best candidates without a (D) or an (R) attached to their name. Together with Chief Bueti, I want to break down barriers caused by the distrust — and in some cases fear -- that many of our residents' have for government and the police, including the Village's. Language such as "warriors...who wage war in the streets" is, at best, unhelpful. It certainly doesn't express who we are and aspire to be as a village.

This discussion will continue. Please join us.

Ken Wray
Mayor